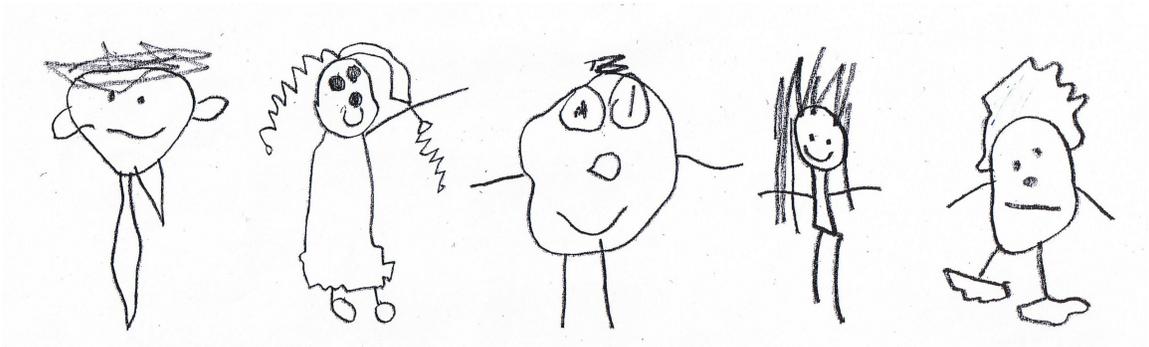


# Kirksville Child Development Center

children ✦ teachers ✦ parents ✦ community

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## A Play Haven



This handbook is for parents interested in participating in the Kirksville Child Development Center parent cooperative, an early childhood program operated by the members of Kirksville Child Development Center, Inc. The following information describes the philosophy and operation of this cooperative school. Kirksville Child Development Center, Inc. is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, and is licensed by the State of Missouri.

### History

The Kirksville Child Development Center (K-CDC) was founded in 2006 following the closure of the Child Development Center at Truman State University in Kirksville, MO. Parents from the community decided to form a cooperative to provide quality early childhood education for children.

### Non-Discrimination Policy

The K-CDC does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, or handicap.

### Philosophy

The philosophy of the K-CDC is based primarily on four things, each of which are addressed in more detail below:

- A strong, caring community instills a sense of belonging for children.
- Play is central and essential to learning for young children.
- Children grow in all developmental areas through play.
- Adults play many vital roles in a supportive environment.

### Community

*“I have a garden of my own  
Shining with flowers of every hue  
I loved it dearly while alone,  
But shall love it more with you.”*  
--Thomas Moore

One of the most important gifts we can give young children is a sense of belonging. A parent coop preschool provides this gift by bringing together teachers, parents, and volunteers of all ages to meet the needs of young children. The center is run and operated by parents who have hired highly qualified teachers to facilitate classroom life. Parents are encouraged to participate in the classroom by being classroom helpers to the teacher. In turn, parents gain increased understanding of children by observing their child in a classroom setting, observing a wide variety of typical development and behavior, and talking with the teachers. Parents are also invited to share their own hobbies, interests, and family traditions with the kids throughout the year.

“The unique nature of the parent cooperative provides an opportunity for both children and parents to experience and belong to a long lasting and caring learning community. Individuals who belong to a community have a sense of autonomy, connectedness and accomplishment” (Griffin, 2005). A sense of community/belonging in school is vital for children’s personal and social development as well as their academic motivation. By spending time together -- learning, laughing, exploring, cuddling, arguing, making up, fostering wonder and curiosity -- community is formed among children, parents, and teachers.

Parents need to attend a mandatory orientation before the start of the year as well as parent meetings that address childhood topics such as guidance and discipline, child development, literacy development, etc. In this way, the needs of parents are also met. Our community collaborates in a spirit of mutual caring, respect and inquiry with the idea that “together we are better!”

Parents, when unable to assist in the classroom due to work schedules, also support our program in a variety of other ways: doing maintenance jobs, serving on the Parent Board, coming on field trips, acting as substitute teachers and/or other responsibilities.

## Play

*“Preschool children learn best by playing and following their own curiosities, by solving real problems such as how to balance a stack of blocks or how to negotiate a zipper, trying a picture puzzle, making mistakes and trying again”*

*--David Elkind*

Play is central and essential to learning for young children; it is the single most important learning experience we can provide them. “The power of play sustains human beings throughout life... Most of children’s learning is bound up in the vital actions of play and playfulness” (Bos and Chapman, 2005). Play naturally offers experiences of belonging, risk-taking, empowerment, and the following of personal interests that foster the development of self that is crucial for healthy development. Play builds a firm foundation for more formal learning later.

Our well-planned environment allows children to grow in all areas of development while playing, making their own choices about what to do, and pursuing their interests at their own pace. A child who is playing with play dough is learning about spatial awareness (a math skill) and physics (a science skill) and gaining self-esteem. A child who wants a toy someone else has learns problem solving and conflict resolution skills. A child using a pendulum such as a tennis ball on a rope to knock down blocks learns about physics and math and construction. A child who reads a book and then

dresses up to act it out is learning about listening, speaking, reading, and creativity. So much happens in play!!!!

## **Development**

Children grow in many areas of development, including social, emotional, physical, language, cognitive, and creative. The well-planned physical environment in the classroom is designed to act as another teacher, allowing children to explore in their own time. Learning centers in the classroom invite children to grow in all areas of development. Centers include a science area and sensory table, books, blocks and building, art, dramatic play, math and manipulatives, writing, music, and a room devoted to large motor play. Other learning opportunities are group time, movement activities, woodworking, outside experiences, field trips, and cooking activities. The curriculum is organized around projects that address the interests and needs of the children.

Our curriculum is planned referencing Project Construct©, The Early Childhood Framework for Curriculum and Assessment. The framework is also aligned with Missouri's Early Childhood Standards. "Based on the constructivist theory of learning, which states that children actively construct their own knowledge of values as a result of interactions with the physical and social worlds, this process-oriented framework not only supports young children's ways of learning but also provides teachers and families with the information they need to make appropriate decisions regarding the education of young children" (PC, pg.1).

We have a mixed-age classroom that consists of up to 20 children ages 2 ½ to 5. There are so many benefits to having many ages in one space. Younger children get a chance to watch and look up to older kids, while older children mentor and "look after" the younger ones. We offer many open-ended materials that can be experienced on different developmental levels. For instance, water in the sensory table can be poured and dumped by a 2 year old, while a 5 year old can create a system of hoses and funnels to experiment with water and air pressure.

## **The Role of Adults**

The K-CDC has many adults involved in the education of the children in our program. While the state of Missouri requires us to have 1 teacher to every 10 children, we usually maintain a 1:4 ratio. We know that having enough trained adults in the classroom allows the kids a freedom to choose what area of the building or outside they want to explore. When many adults are present, kids are properly supervised when they want to play in small groups or by themselves. Two main teachers, who do the bulk of the curriculum planning, provide the sense of consistency and stability so important for young children. We also have regular volunteers, many of whom are parents, who have "on-the-job training" as well as their experience of parenting. Additionally, we have

college students from Truman State University who work here on a weekly basis. We provide trainings for them throughout the year. Lastly, parent, college students, and community members act as visitors to share experiences with a certain topic, such as a profession or health education.

Adults have many roles in the classroom. Above all, we respect the dignity of the whole child, with a consideration of child development and an understanding of brain development. We are mentors who model appropriate and safe behavior, guiding kids to learn conflict resolution when needed. We are playmates and storytellers and musicians who spontaneously sing silly songs. We are observers who watch kids to see what they need and how to meet those needs. We are comforters and consolers when kids are sad, hurt, or simply need a cuddle. We are adventurers as we become pirates and bad guys, princesses and evil witches as we follow kids' leads in pretend play. We are scientists as we provide experiments of baking soda and vinegar or invite kids to make observations from our outdoor observation deck overlooking a waterfall. We are artists as we offer a myriad of art supplies and foster creativity in art and music and movement. We are present.

When planning curriculum, we, the teachers, strive to allow time each day for the kids to create, move, sing, converse, observe, read, and play.

### **Daily Schedule**

Diverse activity choices are offered within the framework of a predictable daily schedule. The schedule is balanced to provide for alternating blocks of vigorous and quiet activity. Times indicated are approximate and flexible.

7:30-9:30	Learning centers in the room
9:15-9:45	Morning snack offered in shifts for interested kids
9:45-10:15	Outside time, projects, group games
10:15-10:45	Small group time, music/movement/stories
10:45-11:30	Outside play, large motor
11:15-11:30	Pick-up for part-day children
11:45-12:15	Lunch
12:15-2:15	Getting ready for nap and nap time/rest time
1:10	Projects or outside for non-nappers
2:15-4:00	Getting up and learning centers, projects and/or outside time
3:00-3:30	Afternoon snack offered for interested kids
4:00-4:30	Group time, music/movement/stories/art project
4:30-5:15	Large motor, learning centers, projects, and/or outside time
5:30	All children picked up by now

The schedule is subject to change based on the needs and natural schedule of a particular group of children, as well as based on the weather.

### **Program Options**

The K-CDC offers both part-day (7:30a.m. – 11:30a.m.) and full-day (7:30a.m. – 5:30p.m.) programs. Part-day children may be enrolled for 5 mornings, 3 mornings, or 2 mornings as available. Standard partial week options are MWF and TTh. The K-CDC is open during the academic year; please refer to the K-CDC school calendar for days off for holidays and teacher workdays. The program is for children ages 3-5, with a limited number slots available for 2 ½-year-olds at the discretion of the director.

### **Tuition**

Tuition is due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month and is delinquent after the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month. A late fee will be assessed with overdue payments.

### **Withdrawals**

Parents or guardians are required to notify the teacher/director two weeks prior to the withdrawal of a child from the K-CDC. Parents are financially liable for two weeks' tuition if notice is not given.

### **Inclement Weather**

Parents will be notified by e-mail if the K-CDC will close due to inclement weather or other circumstances. When in doubt, feel free to call the Director.

### **Arrival and Departure**

Arrival time is flexible before 9:00. Children should, however, arrive at the K-CDC at least by 9:00 each morning. The daily sign-in and sign-out sheet is located in the classroom. Children must be signed in each day and be accompanied to the classroom by an adult. When picking up a child, parents need to speak with a teacher and sign out their child. If someone other than parents or legal guardians pick-up a child, a pick-up release form is required. Individuals who are authorized to pick up a child will be asked to provide picture identification and to sign the child out with a teacher's verification. Unless approval and the identity of the person picking up the child are verified, the child will not be released.

### **Late Pick-up**

There will be an overtime charge for children not picked up at or before regular dismissal times (11:30a.m. for part-day and 5:30p.m. for full-day). For each ten-minute period there will be a \$10 charge payable to the K-CDC. In case of rare unavoidable circumstances concerning late pick-up, the K-CDC should be notified at 660-665-5232.

### **Outdoor Play**

As consistent with licensing regulations, the K-CDC plans at least 60 minutes (usually a lot more!) of active outdoor play time each day. Vigorous outdoor play fosters

physical, cognitive, social-emotional, and creative development. On cold days, the time spent outside may be less than 60 minutes. Children will go outside if the temperature is 20 degrees Fahrenheit or above, including wind chill. All children are encouraged to go outdoors each day.

### **Field Trips**

Field trips are scheduled throughout the year. Parents sign an informed consent form at the time the child is enrolled. Notification is given to parents in advance of all field trips that require leaving the school. Transportation will be provided by parent volunteers who must have a valid drivers' license and proof of insurance. A sign-up sheet will be available to ensure we have adequate supervision for trips. Parents will be assigned a group of kids to ride with them and are responsible for keeping track of their group. Head counts will be conducted several times during the trip, in particular upon arrival and departure from the destination.

During all trips children wear identifying tags. An emergency card file, first aid kit, and needed allergy medications (such as Epipens) are available on field trips. Parents will be asked to leave a child's car seat/booster seat, in compliance with Missouri law, at the K-CDC on field trip days. All parents are invited and encouraged to participate.

### **Communication**

Each family enrolled is provided with a parent mailbox located in the cubby area. Important messages and accident report forms are placed in the mailbox; fliers and newsletters are often sent via e-mail. Please check your mailboxes daily!

### **Orientation**

At the beginning of each school year, an orientation meeting is held to familiarize parents with policies, equipment, materials, routines and strategies for working with the children. Attendance at this meeting is **required** for all parents with children enrolled in the program, as well as other family or friends who may be helping in the classroom.

Parents are welcome at the preschool at all times, whether parent-helping or not. Parents should plan to stay, at least part of the morning, the first few times the child attends. This provides the child with some security until he/she feels comfortable in the new environment.

### **Community Events**

The K-CDC will have parent meetings and trainings throughout the year. We will also have other family events such as potlucks and parties that will be planned by teachers, kids and parents. We also celebrate the Week of the Young Child each year during April by having special days throughout the week and encouraging the larger community to advocate for the educational needs of young children. We even sponsor a

kids' concert at Rotary Park and invite area preschools and families with young children – it's great fun!!!

### **Guidance**

The word “discipline” is often used here, and would be appropriate because the root of the word is “to teach.” However, it often has punitive connotations. “Guidance” retains the sense that conflict is a “teachable moment.” Remember that children this age are VERY YOUNG and are still learning, for many years to come, about themselves personally and socially. We approach children's conflicts as a way to guide them toward solving problems for themselves. We are here to empower them to use their own words to stand up for themselves and/or to learn the boundaries of their power/behavior and to listen when others say STOP.

While a child needs to understand when a certain behavior is inappropriate, the reason behind the behavior needs to be addressed. Many behavior problems occur when we have inappropriate expectations for children, or when they are feeling overwhelmed by a variety of circumstances. Young children are not developmentally ready to understand the ramifications of their behaviors and need support in making safe choices, as they are still very egocentric. They also often cannot find the words to express their emotions and the result can be inappropriate behaviors. We help them begin to name these, which helps them grow in self-awareness.

Teachers model gentle guidance, close supervision, redirection, and teaching appropriate expectations in the context of a supportive environment where the schedule and activities are developmentally appropriate. Adults are ready to step in when a child's actions harm themselves, harm another person, or harm materials/property, whether physically or emotionally. Being egocentric, young children cannot truly understand another's point of view. Therefore, it is important to guide children in identifying and naming their own feelings in conflict situations. We model problem solving with individual children and small groups. Teachers facilitate discussions between children experiencing conflict that help them identify the problem, name their feelings, generate possible solutions, work out a plan, and try the plan. Adults touch base to see if the plan worked, or if we need more brainstorming.

Another guidance strategy is logical consequences. For example, if a child throws blocks, the teacher's first response is to remind the child of appropriate behavior and suggest alternatives, such as, "It is not safe to throw blocks, but it is ok to throw bean bags. When you throw blocks, someone could get hurt. You may build with the blocks, or maybe you'd like to throw beanbags." If the child continues the unsafe behavior, the teacher restates the limit, and reminds the child of a logical consequence, "If you choose to continue throwing blocks, you will have to leave the block area." Thus, the responsibility for choosing appropriate behavior is the child's. Teachers are fair, firm and consistent when implementing logical consequences. The focus always remains on what

the child can do to correct the situation. A brief time away is used only when a child is unable to regain his or her self control. Teachers emphasize that as soon as the child is ready, they will work together to solve the problem.

Some phrases that we use often:

- When possible, we state a direction in the form of what TO do, not what NOT to do. For instance, say “Put your feet on the floor” instead of “Don't stand on the table.” Tell the child the action you desire from them, what TO do so that they are safe.
- That sounds like a solvable problem. Do you need some help?
- I hear mad/frustrated voices. Can I help?
- Do you like her hands on you? Then tell her to take her hands off.
- Is that OK with you?
- I see your face looks mad. Do you want her to stop \_\_\_\_?
- Let me know if I can help.
- My job is to keep you/other kids safe. (That) is NOT safe. I will help you stop.
- Sand is not for throwing and people are not for hitting.
- Books are not for throwing. Please pick it up and put it on the shelf.

In the occasional case of extreme guidance concerns, we will work with the child and family to make a plan to address the behavior. The plan will be one to best support the child and offer consistent support at both home and school. If this need arises, a conference will be scheduled with teachers and parents to develop a strategy that meets the needs of the child. If the child continues to have difficulty with behaviors, we will implement the following steps:

1. The teacher will always discuss problems with a parent at drop-off or pick-up time or with a phone call or e-mail if other times are too busy. We always want to address issues early, as there is often an explanation for the behavior.
2. If there is an occasion of extreme loss of control (biting, striking a child or adult, or extreme physical violence in play), a parent may be called to pick up their child.
3. If continued unexplained problems occur and if they do not decrease with planned interventions, we may recommend for an assessment by an outside resource.

Research tells us that the predicting future success in school is directly tied to how well children can make friends and get along with others. We are dedicated to helping all our children develop positive self-esteem and confidence needed to make friends and get along with others.

More information about guidance at the K-CDC will be discussed at the Parent Orientation, parent education nights, and newsletters.

### Accidents and Emergencies

Sometimes children get bumps and bruises. After helping the child, a teacher will complete a minor accident report form describing the injury, any first aid administered and the child's reactions. The form is placed in the parent mailbox for the parent to read and initial. Initialed forms are given to the teacher and will be placed in the child's file. In the case of a more severe accident the parent/guardian will be contacted by telephone. If emergency care is required and a parent or guardian cannot be reached, the emergency contacts named by the parent/guardian will be contacted.

### Illness

Children's health is important. Children who are ill should be kept at home. If a child will not be in attendance because of illness, the Center should be contacted at 660-665-5232. An informal health check of each child will be done upon arrival by a teacher. The staff is authorized to send a child home if the child's health appears to be a risk to him/herself or others. If a child becomes ill during the day, a parent/guardian will be called to pick up the child. If a parent/guardian cannot be reached by telephone, one of the emergency contacts will be called.

Children should remain at or be sent home, if he/she has any of the following:

1. A fever 100.0 degrees or above (99.0 taken under the arm).
2. Not been fever-free for at least 24 hours.
3. Been on antibiotics for less than a 24 hour period.
4. A sore throat that has not been examined or treated.
5. A productive cough.
6. A contagious and/or infectious condition (viral infection, lice, conjunctivitis, impetigo, etc.) that has not been under treatment for at least 24 hours.
7. Any obvious viral illness: diarrhea, nausea, or indication of yellow or green discharge or any other condition that may be contagious to others.
8. In regards to some contagious conditions, parents may be asked to bring a note from their physician before their child may return to school.

This policy is strictly enforced as children are in such close contact with each other, and the Center does not have the facility or staff to care for an ill child. If a parent/guardian is called, they need to pick the child up promptly. If a parent has not arrived within thirty minutes after the telephone call, the emergency contact will be called to pick up the child.

A child may attend the K-CDC:

1. If a cold is over, but a nasal drip remains.
2. After being on antibiotics or fever-free for 24 hours.
3. When he/she is able to participate in all activities including outside play.

Parents will be notified when a possible exposure to a communicable condition is known. The director or a teacher should be contacted if your child has a communicable condition. If a child has a contagious condition, confidentiality is respected. Parents, teachers and volunteers should follow the above guidelines, as well.

### **Administration of Medication**

At times a child may need to receive medication at school. Written consent is required to administer medication; medication administration forms are available at the K-CDC. The name of the medication, date, time, and dosage to be given are required. Forms may be authorized for one full week. Staff members will record the date and time of medication administration. Please note that all medication must be in the originally labeled container. The child's name is necessary on the container, as well. Parents may also come to the K-CDC to give medication, as needed, if desired. Staff is unable to administer Tylenol for fever or headache.

### **Immunizations**

Parents are required to provide proof that children enrolled in the K-CDC have been immunized according to the schedule approved by the Missouri Department of Health.

### **Safety**

Fire, tornado and earthquake drills are held on an alternating basis each month. Evacuation plans are posted. Basic safety practices are incorporated throughout the program.

Both teachers and volunteers are mandated to report any suspicion of child abuse or child neglect. The number for the child abuse hot line is 1-800-392-3738. If a teacher is suspected of child abuse or neglect it also should be reported to the Board who will determine further steps to be taken during the investigation.

### **Nutrition**

Meals at the K-CDC consist of morning snack for all children, and lunch and afternoon snack for full-day children. All meals are provided by the K-CDC and prepared on-site; all menus must meet licensing guidelines. Emphasis is placed on nutritious food that children will enjoy. The Director should be notified, in written form, of any food allergies or dietary restrictions your child may have. In addition, children/parents are not allowed to bring outside food (including candy, gum, drinks, breakfast, etc.) into the center due to allergy and safety concerns.

Food preparation is an integral part of the curriculum; children and teachers frequently prepare meal items together. Meals are served family style with a teacher eating at the table with the children. Children serve themselves and are encouraged, but

not forced, to try all foods served. Children help clear the table following meals.

### **Nut-free Environment**

For the 2011-2012 school year, the K-CDC will be a nut-free environment. This means that peanut and tree nut products should not be brought to the school. And, to the extent that it can be reasonably ascertained, foods that are processed on machinery that also processes peanuts and tree nuts are not allowed. Parents, staff, and volunteers should make every reasonable effort to read food package labeling to avoid serving these products during snack and lunch times.

### **Hygiene**

Children wash their hands upon arrival, before and after all snacks and meals and before and after engaging in food preparation activities. Teachers remind children to wash their hands after toileting. Some children benefit from being gently reminded to use the toilet at regular times throughout the day. We know accidents occur. However, it is expected that potty-training is well in progress before attending school. Teachers support the development of hygienic habits by providing positive feedback and modeling appropriate behaviors.

### **Clothing and Other Items to Bring From Home**

Clothing for young children should be comfortable, functional and washable. Although children are encouraged to wear smocks for messy activities, clothes do get dirty. Children should not come to school in clothing that may be a safety risk: slick-soled shoes, cowboy boots, flip-flops, or baggy clothing that may be stepped on or caught in equipment. An extra pair of tennis shoes (or other sturdy shoes) may be sent for outdoor play. Children also may keep a pair of slippers at school during the winter months.

A complete, season appropriate, labeled change of clothing should be kept in your child's cubby at all times. If clothing becomes too dirty or wet, a teacher will help the child change and place dirty items in a plastic bag in the child's cubby. Clothing should be appropriate for the weather. Boots, hats, mittens, coats, and scarves should be labeled.

Some children like to post family pictures in their cubbies. Children may also bring items from home. We often will ask children to bring items to show related to a theme or a collection. Children should not bring candy or money, unless related to a theme. These items can be distractions and cause conflict. Many days, we will have "Show Time" when kids can bring anything from home to show their friends. They will not be required to share their item, as it is not developmentally appropriate to expect children this age to share. However, if the item is too much of a distraction and causes conflicts the child may be asked to put the item in their cubby until "Show Time." Also, please do not send guns or other toys that promote fighting or violence. We will be modeling responsible use of toys and items from home; however, these items may

become lost or broken and this will be used as a learning opportunity, so plan what is sent to school accordingly! Please let the teacher know in advance if a pet wants to visit so we can prepare.

### **Cubbies**

Artwork, projects, and soiled clothing are placed in the children's cubbies. These items should be taken home daily.

### **Lost and Found**

Any articles for which the staff cannot identify the owner will be put in a lost and found box for the remainder of the semester. Labeling helps you identify lost clothes!

### **Other Services and Projects**

A collaborative relationship is maintained with Truman State University, which allows K-CDC children to benefit from services provided through faculty and student involvement. This will include activities such as speech and hearing screenings, health education, and music and dance classes. Classroom volunteers also contribute to our low teacher/student ratio. Services and projects might include:

- Communications Disorders graduate students conduct speech, hearing, and language screenings. Parents sign permission forms and will be notified of the results.
- Scholarship students volunteer in the classroom.
- Nursing students observe and present group times on health and safety topics.
- Students from child development courses may observe.
- Other research in the field of early childhood education may be conducted. Parents will be notified and will sign a separate release form for these projects.

### **Closing Statement**

We thank you for your interest in our program. Please contact us with any questions you may have. We look forward to growing in friendship and community with you and your family!

### **References**

Bos, Bev and Chapman, Jenny. (2005) *Tumbling Over the Edge: A Rant for Children's Play*. Turn the Page Press, Inc., Roseville, CA.

Griffin, Sherri (2005). *A Millersburg Preschool Book*. Millersburg Publishing Group, Fulton, MO.